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Academic Professionalisation and Hybrid Professionalism in Adult Education⁷

Abstract: Discourse on professionalisation and professionalism is a longstanding focus in adult education practice and research. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Freidson (2001) and Noordegraaf (2007, 2015), this qualitative research combined an explorative method and an in-depth analysis (Nutt Williams & Hill, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). It focussed on the comparison of adult education programmes at the Master's level in three countries (document analysis), and the critical reflection on logics of action three adult educators of the referred countries themselves use to describe their work (semi-structured interviews). Thematic content analysis was used to examine data concerning academic professionalisation and professionalism in adult education. Findings showed that the extent of promoting professionalisation appeared differently in each country,

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depending on the social and historical contexts and the interplay among several factors within which higher education institutions offering programs on adult education are settled. In addition, the practice of adult educators expressed by themselves involved several logics of action. This study highlights the presence of hybrid professionalism in adult education.⁸

Keywords: adult education, academic professionalisation, hybrid professionalism, logics of action, comparison

Introduction

Discourse on professionalisation and professionalism has long been an important topic in adult education research, policy, and practice (Canário, 1999; Jütte et al., 2011; Latke & Jütte, 2015; Milana & Skrypnyk, 2009). As a heterogeneous and complex field of practice, interwoven with many other functional systems (e.g., regarding legal rules, practice norms or financial regulations, among others), adult education work contexts place high demands on those who are working in them. Therefore, professionalisation and professionalism have been discussed and defined by several authors in relation to the field of adult education (Doyle et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2017). Professionalisation of adult educators can take place both within formal settings, like (academic) education (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012) or in further training programmes (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning et al., 2021), as well as informally, in the field activity itself. Professionalism relates to how one interprets, reflects, and reacts autonomously to unpredictable and unstandardised situations in an individual's performance (Nittel, 2000; Tietgens, 1988). It is based on specific expert knowledge and competences developed during an individual's career.

In present times, social situations are becoming more complex and characterised by many significant transformations (Evetts, 2011). On a global level, the Covid-19 pandemic is just one example of such a transformative force that had immediate and overarching influence on the design of teaching and learning contexts worldwide. Such transformations raise the question of how adult educators are themselves educated and how they deal confidently

⁸ We thank all the participants who engaged in the comparative group "Activities, competences and hybrid professionalism in adult education" during the "Adult Education Academy – International and comparative studies in adult education and lifelong learning" taking place in February 2023 at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Germany. The work and discussions within this group and its international members were the starting point of this article and enriched authors' perspectives.

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and effectively within the changed conditions of their domains of activity. Clearly, professionalism of adult educators is linked to the broad challenges these practitioners are increasingly confronted with, along with the diverse demands for action in their daily work. In such complex contexts, adult educators have to balance between different demands they encounter in their daily work (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019; Freidson, 2001; Noordegraaf, 2007) developing several logics of action.

To gain initial insight into professionalisation and professionalism of adult educators, the following research questions were established to guide this study:

- How are structures of academic professionalisation, namely the Master's level degree programmes, established in the countries of Austria, Canada, and Hungary?
- How are the logics of action understood by adult educators in relation to their work?

In the first section of this article, we explore academic professionalisation as a path towards meeting the initial education challenges faced in the field of adult education. Further, based on the changing contextual conditions of work, we discuss how professionalism deals with the emerging, sometimes conflicting, demands professional adult educators are facing in their daily work. In the second section, we discuss the methodology, introduce the research participants, and present our approach based on a comparison of three study programmes in adult education at the Master's level in Austria, Canada, and Hungary; this comparison is followed by an in-depth analysis of the different logics of action based on data from the three interviews conducted with adult educators working in different practice fields in the above three countries. The fourth section presents our findings from the comparison of the programmes, as well as our in-depth analysis of the interviews. The article ends with the presentation of the main conclusions and arguments for further research.

Theoretical framework

Professionalisation can be understood as the process of developing specific expert knowledge and competences within a field of practice (Egetenmeyer & Käpplinger, 2011). This process often takes place in formal structures, such as higher education institutions (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programmes). The complexity of the domains of professional activity usually requires an academic education (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012) in order to "solve complex

requirements at a high scientific and theoretical level” (Gieseke, 2018, p. 61). According to several researchers, this path of academic professionalisation is focused on the acquisition of scientifically based knowledge and competences (Jütte et al., 2011; Lattke & Jütte, 2015; Milana & Skrypnyk, 2009). They have emphasised practical domains in the discipline, along with the development of the basic skills for acting independently, being able to interpret individual practice situations, and to reflectively transfer the theoretical knowledge into these situations.

In parallel, it is essential to consider that work contexts are important for knowledge and competence development. In fact, during the performance of professional activities, new knowledge and competences are developed when facing challenging situations. In this sense, the capacity of interpreting, reflecting, and reacting autonomously to unpredictable and unstandardised situations in individual practice is based on specific expert knowledge and competences (Nittel, 2000; Tietgens, 1988). Demands of professional action, which can be further developed during the individual’s career, influence the ways adult educators think and do their work.

Freidson (2001) created an ideal-typical model for conceptualising the interconnectedness of different logics influencing concrete situations in the specific field of work. This model included three logics that do not completely represent reality, yet their interpretation and illustration can be suitable to examine the world of work for adult educators. The first logic is professionalism, understood as a specialised activity based on scientifically related knowledge. Professionalism is socially recognised and associated with a special status based on this acquired knowledge (Breitschwerdt, 2022). This logic is characterised by autonomy, which means that the activity is controlled self-responsibly by specific practitioners and can be legitimised by the corresponding proof of qualifications from academic education and training. Professionalism is thereby an “intellectual construct and not a portrayal of any real occupation” (Freidson, 2001, p. 127). The logic of professionalism is different to the two other ideal-typical model of logics of action: one is the market logic, characterised by supply and demand and by the assumption that all action in the context of work has consumption and prosperity as its main goals; and the other is bureaucratic logic, composed of hierarchy, control, and administration.

In practice, adult educators do not act only following the logic of professionalism. They are always confronted with other challenges and requirements arising within the other logics of action at the same time. The challenge for

professional action lies in balancing between the three logics, which are partly contradictory and frequently conflicting. Consequently, a changed perspective on professionalism, which considers that professional action is not free of challenging demands arising from the different logics of action, is developed. Noordegraaf (2007) thus adopted the ideal-typical model of Freidson (2001) and showed the necessity of hybrid professionalism to understand the conflicting demands in work. The core of hybrid professionalism is the connection of the different logics of action and the interplay between classical professionalism and new requirements in the present working world (Breitschwerdt, 2022). The relational aspect of this concept brings a new perspective to professionalism as the interdisciplinary knowledge and interactive skills are considered more critical to work. In this regard, Noordegraaf (2007) stated that “[P]rofessionals know how to operate in organised, interdisciplinary settings that cannot be organised easily; they know that cases, clients, costs, and capacities are interrelated” (p. 775).

Noordegraaf (2007) described hybrid professionalism as a reflexive connection between work, organisational action, and social conditions. The key is not only to perceive this interconnectedness, but also to make it meaningful for one's own professional actions. In doing so, it is important to apply reflexive control, and to strengthen the idea of professionalism in the respective work contexts (Breitschwerdt, 2022). Such reflexive control can enable a conscious approach to the interconnection of the different logics of action, and thus, improve one's own professional actions. In many cases, practitioners, including adult educators, are increasingly confronted with diverse demands of action in their daily work. In such complex contexts of action, practitioners no longer rely only on expert knowledge and the logic of professionalism. They must take into account the increasingly various demands and requirements of other action logics (e.g., bureaucratic logic or the market logic) (Freidson, 2001). Thus, professionalism becomes increasingly hybrid professionalism (Noordegraaf, 2007), which emphasises balancing between the different logics of actions. For the field of adult education, hybrid professionalism means that tasks completed by adult educators are not exclusively pedagogical. For example, these practitioners must deal with issues related to quality management, standardisation, and funding, in addition to teaching and learning (Breitschwerdt et al., 2019). Such a balance determines and is determined by the daily professional actions of adult educators, as they must combine different logics of action in their professional activities (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019).

Methodology

The research method used in this study is qualitative (Boeren, 2018; Fejes & Nylander, 2015; Lichtman, 2023). As Nutt Williams and Hill (2012) and Williams and Morrow (2009) suggested, a consensual qualitative research based on an exploratory method supported by a document analysis allowing educational comparison of higher education programmes at the Master's level in three different countries was achieved in this article. This was followed by an in-depth analysis established on semi-structured interviews allowing a comprehensive discussion of logics of action expressed by adult educators themselves about their work. The interviews provided focus on the work practice directly from the point of view of adult educators. Thematic content analysis was the data interpretation technique used both for documents and interviews collected.

The exploratory method was used when examining the information on higher education programmes at the Master's level of adult education. The initial formal education that adult education practitioners may acquire before acting as adult educators is one of the most discussed issues in academic professionalisation (Egetenmeyer & Käßlinger, 2011). These programmes, called structures of academic professionalisation (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012), are a significant component in the adult educators' professional development. The first step of the data collection prompted a discussion about the structures of academic professionalisation of adult educators. These structures included higher education paths that might be followed by those willing to become adult educators, such as knowledge and competences (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019). It assumes that academic professionalisation, through formal higher education programmes, like Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programmes, influence the adult educators' knowledge and competence.

Data from three particular adult education Master's programmes in three countries, Austria, Canada, and Hungary, (Table 1) were collected. These countries were chosen because of their distinct adult education policies, practices, and main educational approaches preferred in projects and activities implemented (Lima & Guimarães, 2011). Specifically, we selected the University of Klagenfurt (Austria), the University of British Columbia (Canada), and the University of Pecs (Hungary) as those representing each country's Master's programmes. Based on the official website of each programme, we conducted a thematic content analysis to identify specific structures of academic professionalisation (University of British Columbia, 2023; University of Klagenfurt, 2020, 2023; University of Pecs, 2020). Comparisons amongst the programmes were made using the following four steps: 1) descriptive juxtaposition of Master's degree programmes

selected for analysis; 2) analytical juxtaposition; 3) descriptive comparison; and 4) analytical comparison (Egetenmeyer, 2016).

Table 1. Overview of Master's Degree Programmes

Master Programme	University & Country	Programme Structure	Curriculum/Content	Documents Analysed
Adult Learning and Education and Vocational Education and Training	University of Klagenfurt, Austria	4 semesters 120 ECTS Master of Arts	Fundamentals of Education and Educational Science	Website (https://www.aau.at/studien/master-erwachsenenbildung/#toggle-id-1) Module Handbook (https://www.aau.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Mitteilungsblatt-2019–2020–20-Beilage-11.pdf)
Adult Learning and Education	University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada	4 terms: 30 credits or 27 credits of coursework plus a graduating paper/project	Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Adult Learning and Education, Adult Education Program Planning Theory, Theory and Research on Adult Learning), one research method course and several electives	Website (https://edst.educ.ubc.ca/programs/adult-learning-and-education/) Module Handbook (https://edst.educ.ubc.ca/files/2013/05/ale-program-brochure-may-2013-upd1.pdf)
Andragogy/ Adult Education	University of Pécs, Hungary	4 semesters 120 ECTS Master of Arts	Theory and practice of adult learning and education as a development process of adults, societies and cultures in different life contexts considering the lifelong learning concept	Website (https://international.pte.hu/study-programs/ma-adult-education-andragogy) Module Handbook (https://international.pte.hu/sites/international.pte.hu/files/doc/Adult%20Education%20MA_UP_17_03_2021.pdf)

This study included an in-depth analysis based on semi-structured interviews with three adult educators in the selected countries. The semi-structured interviews (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001) focused on analysing the opinions of the adult education professionals in terms of the adult educators' professionalism, and the logics of action. The underlying perspective to the research was that knowledge and competences can be learned in adult education, that they can be developed not only in higher education settings, but within work contexts as well. As a window into professional practice, the interviews allowed a micro analysis of how the interviewees, namely adult educators, perceived their work. The interviews were based on a set of open-ended questions on the topic of the adult educators' professionalism. Various issues of the adult educators' work, along with the problems and challenges they faced in everyday professional activity, were explored in-depth.

The interviewees were selected having in mind the specific adult education domain in which they were working, such as adult education management, or adult education and teaching (e.g., Zarifis & Papadimitriou, 2015). All the chosen interviewees had achieved a MA and/or PhD at the universities selected for this research. The final criterion was that they had more than five years of professional experience as an adult educator. This characteristic follows Sennett's (2008) statement that at least five thousand hours are needed to make someone a professional or to develop craftsmanship. The three interviewees and their demographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Interviewees (A, B, and C)

	Age	Gender	Qualification	Experience in AE	Current Job Description
A (Austria)	37	male	Master & doctoral degrees in AE	Experience in different fields of AE, e.g., in an adult education centre (VHS9)	Pedagogical director of an institution offering further training for adult educators
B (Canada)	60	female	Master's degree in adult education	Working in the field for 21 years; Education of community-based local farmers; ESL teacher in Asian countries; University business school to support visiting scholars from abroad	Retired in 2022. Last position: program coordinator/designer (liberal arts education) in a higher education extended learning centre
C (Hungary)	36	female	PhD in Adult Education	Teacher of foreign languages (public high school & private language school for adults); teacher and researcher of education of older adults (Erasmus+ 60 Project)	Assistant professor at the University in the field of adult education

The collected data were examined through thematic content analysis (Anderson, 2007). Krippendorff (2019) argued that content analysis allows replicable and valid inferences on texts (referred to as aims on higher education websites or in the context such as logics of action expressed by the adult educators in the interviews). The documents and interviews were therefore analysed using deductive categories, as the ones referred to above, understood as themes for analysis. These categories support thematic content analysis and were established as an attempt to make inferences by objectively and systematically describing and interpreting specific characteristics of the data. The discussion about and interpretation of the

⁹ Acronym for *Volkshochschule*, adult education local centre in German.

data were based on the theoretical frameworks of academic professionalisation (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019) and logics of action in professional practice (Freidson, 2001; Noordegraaf, 2007).

Findings from Comparing Structures of Academic Professionalisation

In our first discussion of the findings, we highlight the three Master's programmes in higher education institutions that attempt to professionalise adult educators through degree offerings.

University of Klagenfurt Master's Programme

The Master's programme in Adult Learning and Education and Vocational Education and Training at the University of Klagenfurt lasts four semesters and comprises 120 ECTS¹⁰. A Bachelor's degree in a professionally appropriate subject is a prerequisite for enrolling in this programme. The language of instruction is German, and the programme is completed with the academic degree Master of Arts (University of Klagenfurt, 2023). The Master's programme comprises various subareas characterised by diversity in content and domains. Subjects included Fundamentals of Education and Educational Science, In-depth Fundamentals of Adult Learning and Education and Vocational Education and Training, Specific Learning and Educational Theories, Research Fields and Methods, and a Master's Seminar and Electives. The main elements of the programme also include the writing of a Master's thesis, and completion of various free electives and a practicum. The students have to complete 150-hour mandatory internship. The content and curricula cover the analysis, design, and argumentation of formal teaching-learning settings of adult learning and education and vocational education and training, as well as accompaniment, analysis, and promotion of informal and self-organised learning of adults. The Master's programme focuses on environments in teaching and learning, educational management, research institutions, projects and other areas of adult learning and education and vocational education and training (University of Klagenfurt, 2023).

¹⁰ ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; 1 ECTS = 25 to 30 hours working/studying time.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) Master's Programme

The Adult Learning and Education (ALE) programme at the University of British Columbia (UBC) is the oldest graduate adult education programme in Canada, as well as one of the oldest in North America as it was established in 1957 (Selman et al., 1998). This programme aims to help students understand the diverse contexts in which adult learning occurs. Students explore the roles of adult educators from a wide variety of theoretical, conceptual, and philosophical perspectives, with particular focus on social justice, community development and democratic engagement (University of British Columbia, 2023).

There are several diploma, certificate, and degree options within the ALE programme, which target diverse adult educators; they have different purposes and timeframes in relation to gaining the credentials. Among them, the Master of Education (MEd) is the oldest master's programme in adult education at UBC. The MEd is a professional degree for those who wish to improve their knowledge and skills as practitioners in any adult education setting. Students take three core courses (Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Adult Learning and Education, Adult Education Program Planning Theory, Theory and Research on Adult Learning), one research methods course, and several electives, which can include courses in other departments and disciplines. Students can complete the programme with 30 credits or 27 credits of coursework, plus a graduating paper/project focused on an issue or concern in their field of practice (University of British Columbia, 2023).

University of Pecs Master's Programme

In response to the emerging demand for professional adult educators on the national labour market, the University of Pecs launched a Master's Degree (MA) programme in Andragogy/Adult Education (AE) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2006. The programme was initially offered in Hungarian and later in English (2019) as an international programme (University of Pecs, 2020). Although there are 65 universities in the country, this is the only MA programme aimed at training adult educators. Students attending it study andragogy as a Single Honours degree. Its graduates can pursue careers in organisations providing both formal and non-formal adult education and training services, as well as in educational policy making, counselling, and advising.

The programme has a standard four semesters with 24 mandatory and optional subjects in the curriculum, and a required workload of 120 ECTS.

Although the programme integrates a variety of teaching, learning and assessment methods (seminars, lectures, research projects, distinct kinds of group work and individual assignments), the main approach is learner-centred, which is reflected in the programme structure. The mandatory courses combine theoretical topics (andragogy, gerontology, psychology of adult learning, theory of science, history and politics of AE, active citizenship, AE ethics, etc.), applied disciplines (human resource development and counselling, curriculum development and quality in AE, managing AE institutions and projects, e-learning, etc.), policy related modules (the role of law in AE, labour market-related knowledge and policy of the European Union, sociocultural aspects of adult education in Europe, etc.), along with methodology and research focused courses (adult education research and development, theory and practice of empirical research, methodologies of teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation). The programme also integrates two types of practicums: a research practicum including thesis consultations and practical placement in an organisational setting (160 hours).

Discussion about the Similarities and Differences among Master's Programmes

Based on the descriptions of the Master's programmes in Austria, Canada, and Hungary, we identified similarities and differences among the programmes. The comparison focused on adult education as a field of practice in each of the countries selected by appraising the similarities of historical developments in Austria and Hungary and the differences in Canada.

Austrian Programmes

The beginning of Austrian adult education dates to the Enlightenment period in the 18th century, where the focus was to educate and train people (Gruber & Lenz, 2016). The economic roots of this field of education lie in industrialisation, which increased the demand for a qualified workforce. In addition, the question concerning equality in society, namely participation in general education to create better living and learning conditions for all, played a role in adult education. Yet, the greatest developments in adult education in this country date back to the 20th century, the 1970s, which brought many changes. The 1973 Adult Education Law regulated funding for adult education by the State for the first time

(Gruber & Lenz, 2016)¹¹. The basic requirements institutions extending adult education must fulfil have been defined in this context¹².

Master's degree programmes in adult education in Austria exist to ensure quality in the field of education (Gruber & Lenz, 2016). The university locations in Graz, Styria (University of Graz, 2023) and Klagenfurt, Carinthia (University of Klagenfurt, 2023) are the main higher education institutions offering education and training programmes to adult educators in Austria. At these institutions, Master's degree programmes are offered for the special field of educational sciences.

Hungarian Programmes

The history of adult education in Hungary stretches back to the 1850s when adult education and training was institutionalised and integrated into the state educational policy (Felkai, 1986). During a long evolutionary process, adult education and training structures adapted to the ongoing economic, political, and social transformations of the country. Several governmental regimes were included in these changes that involved socialist rule, post-war democratisation of schooling, westernisation, and EU integration (Nemeth, 2014).

The formal training of adult educators at university level was first institutionalised in Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s, which was followed by multiple transformations in understanding adult education as a profession and subsequent changes of degree names, curricula, and content until the 2000s (Beszédes & Farkas, 2023). The formalisation of adult education at the national level was carried out in 2001 with the adoption of the Adult Education Act (101/2001), which laid down the main structures for adult education and training (Laki, 2013), as well as education and training requirements for adult educators. This was followed by establishment of the first BA, MA and PhD programmes in adult education by the Hungarian universities. It was subsequently supported and specified by European Union regulations and policies (Council of the European Union, 2011, 2021).

¹¹ The establishment of KEBÖ also took place by that time. KEBÖ is the Conference of Austrian Adult Education and includes institutions that are considered the core of adult education. KEBÖ today consists of ten adult education associations (Gruber & Lenz, 2016). It is an independent umbrella organisation that fulfils the wish of many adult education associations to collaborate on overarching concerns.

¹² One essential criterion is the provision of a regular offer that is systematic and publicly communicated. Adult education must also form the core activity of the institution. It is equally relevant that the institution has already been offering and implementing adult education activities for more than three years. Finally, at least the manager or a full-time staff member must have sound pedagogical training and two years of professional experience in the field of adult education. These aspects show that the adult education landscape in Austria is characterised by a diversity of institutions. They are financed both under the supply and demand principle and from public coffers (Gruber & Lenz, 2016).

Canadian Programmes

In contrast to the above programmes, Canada's adult education derived predominantly from social purposes such as national cohesion, inclusive citizenship, and community building as consensus. These themes emerged on the federal level based on colonial settlers and an immigration-oriented nation significance (Nesbit, 2011). Canada's geographically far-flung and large territory, and differing historical and political contexts among major provinces, have been shaped during the nation-building process. These factors have affected adult education to develop differently from that of European countries mentioned above. Consequently, adult education policies and domains (programmes and learning opportunities) vary across provinces to meet the specific needs of the populations they serve within the territories (Selman et al., 1998). Because of this diffuse nature, as well as the deep-rooted social purpose tradition that emphasises democratic citizenship, academic professionalisation in the field of adult education has been rarely discussed in literature.

Canadian adult educators began actively promoting professionalisation of the field in the 1950s. This era was a pivotal decade for professional approach in adult education that came with four core directions: the emergence of a sense of vocation and professionalism; the development of training opportunities; institutional development; and the growth of a body of literature (Selman et al., 1998). Among these varied efforts, post-secondary universities across the country began to play a significant role in the structured, institutional development of adult education¹³.

Discussion on Comparison of Master's Programmes

Considering these contextual and historical developments, we compared the three countries in terms of the general features of the three Master's programmes, along with the programme structures and specific curriculum/content.

In terms of general features, all three Master's programmes shared the concept of lifelong learning and education, and similarly put emphasis on the diverse settings of adult education (formal, non-formal, and informal), theory,

¹³Thirty-seven post-secondary educational institutions were providing adult education programmes across Canada at the time of writing (Canadian Adult Education Programs | CASAE | ACÉÉA, 2022). To become an adult educator, one usually needs to enrol in a post-secondary institution to acquire a certificate or a degree, which takes two to three years. Educators through post-secondary institutions are hired by government-funded colleges and institutes, private career training schools, companies, or community and government agencies.

and research-oriented practices. Master's programmes in Austria and Hungary have more similarities than differences, whereas the Canadian one substantially differs from them. This finding partly demonstrates the heterogeneity of adult education, particularly in practices and training programmes across countries and provinces. These differences are influenced by numerous factors such as historical origin, socio-cultural, economic, and demographic contexts, as well as national (and provincial) policies. More significantly, Hungary and Austria share the European framework of lifelong learning (Council of the European Union, 2011), which similarly informs national policies for adult education, including the development of training and education programmes for adult educators in the two countries – the focus is on vocational education, practice-based, rigorous educational programmes. In contrast, Canada demonstrates distinctive features in these aspects, and focuses on social-purpose, province-oriented, flexible educational programmes.

Examining the structure of Master's programmes, all three programmes had a similar time span to attain the degree: two years or four semesters. However, Master's programmes in Austria and Hungary showed a similar level of requirements compared to the Canadian programme. Noticeably, the post-secondary institutions in Austria and Hungary offer the degree of Master of Arts (MA) for adult education, whereas institutions in Canada offer a variety of degrees at the Master's level, including MA, Master of Education (MEd), and other certificates and diplomas for qualifications in the field of adult education. Another distinct difference was found in the workload between the European countries and Canada. While 120 ECTS are required in Austria and Hungary (equalling 24 courses on average), Canada required ten courses (30 credits) for the completion of the MEd degree. Also, the Canadian programme allowed for writing a graduating paper in lieu of a course (3 credit hours). This difference reflects a higher requirement level in the more rigid structure of European programmes, and the relatively flexible, learner-centred structure in the Canadian programme that may meet the needs of the adult learner more readily.

The University of Pecs had the strictest admission requirements and enrolled only students with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Education/Social Science/ Psychology, as well as a minimum B2 level of English proficiency according to CEFR¹⁴. In contrast, the University of Klagenfurt required a BA diploma in majors that were relevant to the programme. The greatest opportunities for diverse applicants were offered by the UBC, which welcomed students with a variety of backgrounds, including international students, seeing it as an advantage

¹⁴CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is an internationally recognised standard for describing language proficiency with 6 levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), from basic to proficient.

and an opportunity to adopt new perspectives and practices into the programme and university.

Lastly, the content and curriculum of each programme in the three countries demonstrated interesting aspects in both similarity and difference. All three programmes offered various electives to students, thus, recognising diverse domains and teaching areas, as well as diverse topics, subjects, and concerns in the field of adult education. Further inquiry, however, again showed significant similarity between Austria and Hungary compared to Canada. The Canadian programme emphasised a general sense of adult education, with a historical and philosophical focus based on theory and research. Students were required to enrol in three courses and one research method as mandatory, along with choice in electives. On the other hand, Master's programmes in Austria and Hungary seem to take a more practical approach than Canada, focusing on vocational education and a practicum. For example, the University of Klagenfurt Master's programme required 150 hours of mandatory internship, while students in the Hungarian programme needed to complete 160 hours of practicum. In the educational context, the Austrian programme consisted of three different streams, with focus not only on theory and research orientation, but on cooperation among different institutions as well. This focus provided an emphasis on management skills and legal issues for the students. At the University of Pecs in Hungary, the Master's programme was based on the social sciences perspective. As a relatively new adult education training programme, it highlights the active integration of the European Union framework as the programme draws on the European Education Area topics and concerns (European Union, 2023). The focus on students' engagement in international programmes and exchanges includes a specific module on EU policy-related courses in the programme.

Findings from Participants' Interviews on Professionalism

After comparing the Master's programmes of the three countries, the next section focuses on the participants' analyses of the work they have been performing in terms of their roles (pedagogical, management and other). Quotations are used to illustrate critical theoretical discussion. This section on the discussion of findings highlights the three participants' interviews and uses the logics of action (professionalism, market, bureaucratic) to analyse professionalism. We discuss the relevance of hybrid professionalism, the importance of educational work, and the tensions among the logics. The purpose is to critically reflect upon the logics of their work (see Table 2 for data on interviewees).

Hybrid Professionalism: The Importance of Educational Activities

Interviewee A addressed different logics of action in his work as adult educator during the interview¹⁵. When he started working in adult education – more than five years ago – he really wanted to gain his first experience at an adult education centre (VHS). He said he was prompted by the humanistic educational ideal that he associated with this particular adult education institution. During his work, however, he quickly identified tasks that were not solely pedagogical. In the interview, he spoke of the administrative work and management and explained:

The main tasks in my area were acquiring project funds and implementing projects, plus doing the accounting. At the beginning, it wasn't so clear to me. There was really a lot of money involved (Interviewee A).

Operationally, he was required to undertake fewer pedagogical actions since his activities were more about making decisions at a low management level. Still Interviewee A mentioned the importance of specific knowledge concerning adult education. He said:

The [higher education] studies give you a good foundation for this job. I had different academic colleagues, e.g. business economists, psychologists, etc. It was a very diverse mix. I noticed that I could give good professional reasons for every decision at a low management level. It was relatively easy for me to substantiate it with models and theories. A pedagogical view, a decidedly adult pedagogical view, is necessary. My colleagues don't have that. They have more of an administrative logic. They justify it by saying that they have been doing it this way for a long time, but they cannot argue why (Interviewee A).

He was no longer involved in pedagogical activities in his current position and had no contact with participants in adult educational events. Interviewee A's main tasks included management in terms of developing a strategic perspective for the institution he was working in, communication inside and outside the institution, and a representative role. He stated that these activities included

¹⁵ Interviewee A explained that the professionalisation of Austrian adult education was the core mission of the institution he was working in. The educational offerings of his organisation therefore addressed people who are active in adult education, i.e., course instructors, lecturers, or various actors at the micro and macro-didactic levels. He also noted focus on educational management. In response to questions about professionalisation measures for staff engaged in adult education, the interviewee said his activity belonged to the field of vocational adult education.

dealing with topics like financing, cooperation, the mission statement, and the external image of the institution.

Following a similar reasoning and analysis, Interviewee C referred to a variety of professional duties, daily routines at the workplace and complexity of goals, actions, and activities her job required. She noted:

Besides instruction, I also have some kind of official meetings with my colleagues. Also, the people that work in a higher educational context must do some kind of research... we have the research groups meetings. When you belong to your institution, you have to prepare for those duties, and participate actively during these meetings. Besides that, I also have regular meetings related to the work of the department... So sometimes I have a feeling that adult educators who are involved in higher education institutions have to work more than 12 hours a day (Interviewee C).

Therefore, like other professionals in their current workplaces, she was regularly confronted with a diversity of activities requiring a variety of knowledge and competences. Interviewee C referred to her work as a multi-activity practice involving various roles, which sometimes became controversial, overwhelming, and hard to balance.

Most of the professional efforts Interviewee C reflected on were related to pedagogical practices. She noted that these professional endeavours were not limited to functions associated with her disciplinary affiliation; nor were they aimed at meeting the requirements of the institutional professional community she belonged to. On the contrary, in her professional life, she endeavoured to integrate a wider variety of action logics that were inherent in the need for a hybrid logic of professionalism within her institutional context, reconciling with the bureaucratic logic with respect to legal requirements and norms her work had to follow, and the market logic, when she discussed funding. However, the logic of professionalism being dominant in the Interviewee C's work outlines autonomy and ability to perform as an expert in her domain (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019). By describing her daily routines, Interviewee C underlined the importance of agency in the workplace setting and achieving the goals, as well as acknowledgement of her expertise and authority given to her on the institutional level. She explained:

At the university, in my current work, you are the one that sets the goals... You might get the syllabus from a previous colleague, and you might gain some insight related to that. But actually, it's up to you. It's up to your creativity and your personal expectations regarding the course (Interviewee C).

Using this line of reasoning, Interviewee B also largely demonstrated that she regularly encountered different logics of actions, often at odds with one another, and had various demands based on shifting social and economic contexts in her workplace. The most significant logic of action observed in this interview was the logic of professionalism (Freidson, 2001). She repeatedly demonstrated a sense of autonomy and agency that comes with flexibility in planning and organising adult education programmes. She noted, “[We need] organisational skills... scheduling, efficiency, but the ability to adapt, be flexible when [an] instructor suddenly pulls out... We had to go beyond that. So, it was a challenge” (Interviewee B). The logic of professionalism seems to have been reinforced during COVID-19, when Interviewee B was faced with new requirements, such as following pandemic-related regulations and adapting to online courses and the relevant technologies. She tried to utilise and maximise the resources and knowledge that were achieved through her prior learning and working experiences across multiple domains in adult education. At the same time, she continued to pay attention to what learners might want to learn from the courses in the shifting context; “...planning the courses was trying to figure out what will people find interesting... [I cared about] demographic... that I have to look at where they’re coming from, and how can we make this work for them and be respectful” (Interviewee B). It should be noted that this interviewee indicated that in multicultural settings (like Canada), adult educators were required to have intercultural and empathetic skills for learners of various cultural backgrounds. This shaped her solid belief that adult educators needed to thoroughly investigate learners’ specific contexts and backgrounds in order to provide adult education.

It is evident that Interviewee B was equipped with a sense of autonomy in negotiating and responding to multiple, conflicting needs (of learners, budget, and administration) in highly self-responsible ways. Freidson (2001) emphasised that the sense of autonomy was a crucial condition for professionalism. Similarly, the discourse of Interviewee B when referring to professional activities also exhibited hybrid professionalism – a reflexive competence and control that connects work, organisational action, and social conditions within complex and shifting relations (Breitschwerdt, 2022; Noordegraaf, 2007). This flexible and critical notion about the role of adult educators and the sense of autonomy is well connected with the focus of adult education programmes at the higher education institutions where Interview B has been working, and where she had received her professional training as an adult educator¹⁶.

¹⁶ The observations and findings should, however, be interpreted with caution. As indicated in the interview, the extent of autonomy and professionalism that adult educators perceive in other domains with different activities might differ from that of Interviewee B, who had been mostly involved with community-based liberal arts programmes and with coordinating and organising tasks. It encourages further research of different domains in the adult education contexts, such as the Canadian one.

Tensions among Logics: The Relevance of the Market Logic

Review of the discourses found in the three interviews underscores the tensions between the logics for the participants. For example, Interviewee A claimed that his current job was at a higher management level, at which he was no longer involved in pedagogical activities with the learners. His focus was on endeavours such as finances and outward facing activities related to the mission and external image of the institution. All these tasks existed in a state of tension, according to Interviewee A. Although it was important for him to fulfil the pedagogical demand of providing adult education activities and events, financing (budgeting) had to be guaranteed for the organisation event to be held. For Interviewee A, it was important to reconcile and balance the areas of professionalism, market, and bureaucratic logics. But, as director of an adult education institution, his position and job responsibilities emphasised the importance that he largely satisfy management requirements and values for the organisation in contrast to pedagogical concerns.

Through his discussion, Interviewee A clearly followed the model of hybrid professionalism according to Noordegraaf (2007, 2015). References to the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, as well as other statements in the interview highlighted the close interconnection between the micro, meso, and macro levels of adult education (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019), which suggests hybrid professionalism. In this context, Interviewee A spoke of a certain pragmatism that he developed over the years to balance the tensions between logics. He explained:

Funding is often tied to conditions, all of which must be met. E.g., the examination activity in compulsory education. On a pedagogical level, it often doesn't make sense. But then you're standing there. The logics contradict each other. In the meantime, a pragmatism has developed in me, although I am of course an educator. There are no easy ways to balance the areas of tension. Basic pragmatism is my approach. [...] You have to accept the logic. Course leaders are less aware of such tensions. (Interviewee A)

In his explanations, Interviewee A also gave examples of how professionalism is a flexible concept and requires individual and situational action. He argued:

The core of professional action is to recognise that there are no simple solutions and that actions are complex. Professionalism means not sticking to recipes [...] This is where adult education science is needed to bring insights into the field. (Interviewee A)

Therefore, Interviewee A stated that the market logic was always present in his actual work. He pointed out that

The further up the career ladder I climb, the more important market logic becomes. Pedagogical idealism is no longer enough. (Interviewee A)

Thus, his work corresponded to actual professional practice, as according to Breitschwerdt et al. (2019), “Adult education activities are not only pedagogical in nature; professionals also have to deal with questions of funding, quality management and standardisation.” (p. 89)

The market logic was also stressed by Interviewee B. For example, she expressed her conflicting feelings when she learned that an executive director in her workplace decided to increase online courses rather than face-to-face courses because of broad marketability and demand. Yet, many senior adult learners struggled to adapt to online courses and apparently preferred that the organisation organises in-person courses for them.

So, for my boss, who was a director, who basically wanted to see numbers, and then at a higher level of executive director, was [also] looking at numbers. So, the numbers are better online than face-to-face. (Interviewee B)

Increasing competition among adult education institutions for profitability was reinforced during the pandemic era and emphasised by Interviewee B. Furthermore, as an adult educator, she seemed to care about senior adult learners as important populations in adult education. Her organisation’s recent policy of increasing courses for young adults (credit-based) and cutting down community outreach programmes for seniors disappointed her. She stated, “I don’t know what’s gonna happen with the courses I was running... it’s sad...It’s not enough. They’re not a high priority. They never were really high priority but became even more [meaning less relevant] with COVID” (Interviewee B). The impact of online or digitalisation in adult education increased the profit for the organisation in which Interviewee B was working. The market logic was emphasised and appeared to be a constraint to professionalism.

Normative Constraints in Adult Educators’ Work: The Bureaucratic Logic

In parallel with other logics of action, Interviewee B demonstrated that she encountered multiple bureaucratic requirements in her daily practices. It was evi-

dent that at the institutional level, certain rules and expectations were imposed on adult educators in the organisation. For example, she had to follow guidelines for scheduling, the deadlines and was expected to collaborate with different teams and staff on projects (e.g., marketing, technical assistance and educational support). These activities seemed to be embedded in her institution as normalised practices. She, however, suggested that these rules and guidelines might vary depending on each working organisation:

In Canada, we are not national... as a country, we were not unified in promoting education... It's provincial, it's very, it's very provincial, but then even there'll be different ways of doing things between the higher education institution and other departments... that was made at an executive director level for extended learning... it's getting down to quite a very minute level. (Interviewee B)

Interviewee B felt some flexibility in her work and related it to the fact that the programme she was working in was under Liberal Arts and Community Outreach, which included non-credit-based courses. She suggested, for example, that career education programmes (certificate-based) had a more rigid structure than the programmes she was involved in, resulting in less autonomy and more constraining requirements for other adult educators. Nevertheless, she believed that the ways adult education programmes were run in Canada largely depended on each province and institution, which was comparable to other countries she had personally experienced (e.g., Australia was noted). Thus, at the provincial level, a set of standardised categories are provided for adult education programmes in Canada, yet the definitions for the groupings allow for some flexibility and diverse applications by providers.

Interviewee C also reflected on the complex institutional structure of the university as a limitation of individual autonomy of professionals. She emphasised that this structural complexity was ultimately tied to the bureaucratic logic, which, in turn, comprises standardisation (Freidson, 2001). Interviewee C felt confined by the necessity of fulfilling duties she as a professional did not consider important, such as attending meetings discussing plans and goals with other colleagues, or compulsory collaboration on a research project she was not committed to. Perceiving herself primarily as a teacher, Interviewee C was reluctant to engage in activities which she qualifieddenoted as frustrating and a drain of energy. She was aware that these obligations were imposed by the academic hierarchy of the organisation she was working in, where she held a junior position. Thus, the bureaucratic logic limited her autonomy of decisions, depriving her of power to change her work.

Lastly, Interviewee A noted that there were also federal requirements in his work. He remarked that his organisation was directly subordinated to the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and thus bound by instructions and regulations. Interviewee A observed that he found it valuable to acquire the competences to recognise the individual areas of tension in his daily work, especially the bureaucratic logic, and be able to reconcile them with the other logics.

Conclusions

This article aspired to provide a discussion on academic professionalisation, namely at the Master's level, established in Austria, Canada, and Hungary, and to explore the logics of action understood by three adult educators within their daily working practices.

First, it should be noted that the extent of promoting professionalisation and professionalism of adult education differed in each country depending on its social and historical context. Canada highlighted an important thread of social justice content in the programme in comparison to Austria and Hungary. Additionally, the analysis of the Master's programmes showed that the professionalisation of adult educators has been evolving in all three countries due to the recognition that the higher education institutions in which they are delivered are increasingly and globally recognised as crucial stakeholders in the field of adult education (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019; Egetenmeyer & K  pplinger, 2011; Egetenmeyer & Sch    ler, 2012).

In Austria and Hungary, Master's programmes were identified as having a relatively rigid structure, significant workload requirements, and focus on the practical aspect (e.g., credit hours in internships). It can thus be concluded that these programmes maintain a defined set of desired knowledge and competences for adult educators, indicating the extent of advancement of professionalisation in these European countries through academic institutions (Farkas, 2013; Gruber & Lenz, 2016). In contrast, the Canadian educational programmes, even with the broader institutionalisation of adult education in comparison with the European countries, tend to lay stress on more flexible knowledge and competences and the autonomy of adult educators (Nesbit, 2011; Selman et al., 1998). The focus on social purpose and universal cause of adult education for social change was observed in the Canadian programmes and demonstrates why professionalisation of adult education is a more controversial issue than in the two other countries (Nesbit, 2011).

Each of the three interviews showed an interweaving of the different logics when exploring and understanding the holistic, day-to-day practice of adult educators. For example, all the interviewees described the importance of specific knowledge and competences in adult education for the development and implementation of daily work activities. This leads to the conclusion that the content and curricula of academic programmes in adult education are essential for the professionalism of an adult educator (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012). Indeed, the analysis of the Master's programmes in Austria, Canada and Hungary confirms that professionalisation is taken seriously and is supported by academic pathways in all three countries. The concepts and theories in the field of adult education are central when it comes to justifying decisions and actions based on professional knowledge. This deduction is even more significant if we consider that interviewees A, B and C stressed that adult education was a complex field of work that followed different logics and placed high demands on professionals. All three interviewees fulfilled different tasks in their daily work as adult educators that required a prominent level of specific knowledge and competences, which substantiated professionalisation of the field.

Additionally, the practice of adult education was also described as a multi-activity work and involved several logics of action – the market logic, bureaucratic logic, and logic of professionalism. The activities required an understanding of the complexities and an ongoing balancing of the tensions among the logics. The interviewees' discussions emphasised that equivalence of the logics was difficult to maintain or achieve. Rather, hybridisation of the logics seemed particularly relevant to the work of adult education practitioners, given that, in some moments, one or two logics are more prominent. Two interviewees' main work was in the field of teaching, and the emphasis appeared to be on the logic of professionalism (Interviewees B and C). For Interviewee A, the director of an adult education institution, the market logic was the crucial point of reference for his actions at work. These accounts show how closely the logics of action are connected to the respective domain of adult education in terms of the actual job descriptions and work activities.

Finally, the interviews of adult educators were highly reflective in nature. While discussing and sharing thoughts about their work and activities, all three interviewees described details that illuminated the importance of professionalism in their work and the complexity of the specific fields of action when completing tasks or making decisions. Thus, the interviewees showed that the reflective competence as a professional is central to work in the field of adult education. Therefore, in further research, it will be critical to extensively examine the issues

of how the work of an adult educator is developed, and to analyse the knowledge that is used in daily practice, along with the knowledge and competences required to achieve professional tasks.

Lastly, the possibilities and constraints of the work organisations' contexts and challenges imposed by globalisation need further investigation. Digitalisation and profit-seeking in the work organisations in adult education are increasingly important. These trends, illuminated after the pandemic, continue to challenge the professionalisation and professionalism of adult educators and warrant additional attention and study. As adult educators must consider the various demands and logics of action, these factors may contribute to hybrid professionalism in the field. Further studies may show to what extent tensions among logics may be found.

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Akadska profesionalizacija i hibridni profesionalizam u obrazovanju odraslih²³

Apstrakt: Diskurs o profesionalizaciji i profesionalizmu dugo se nalazi u fokusu prakse i istraživanja obrazovanja odraslih. U ovom kvalitativnom istraživanju, koje se oslonilo na teorijski okvir Freidsona (2001) i Noordegraafa (2007, 2015), primenjen je eksploratorni metod kombinovan sa dubinskom analizom (Nutt Williams & Hill, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). Istraživanje je bilo usredsređeno na programe obrazovanja odraslih na nivou master studija u trima zemljama (analiza dokumenata) i na kritičko promišljanje logika akcija troje edukatora koji se bave obrazovanjem odraslih u tim zemljama, a koje su oni sami koristili u opisu svog rada (u polustrukturiranim intervjuima). Sprovedena je tematska analiza sadržaja kako bi se ispitali podaci o akademskoj profesionalizaciji i profesionalizmu u obrazovanju odraslih. Nalazi su pokazali da se stepen u kojoj se profesionalizacija promoviše razlikuje u sve tri zemlje, zavisno od društvenog i istorijskog konteksta i uzajamnog uticaja nekoliko faktora na obrazovne institucije koje nude programe

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²³ Elena Klimkina, Sarah-Maria Rotschnig i Jiin Yoo: metodološko sprovođenje (sprovođenje intervjua) i analiza podataka, pisanje članka s fokusom na rezultate i zaključak; Lisa Breitschwerdt i Paula Guimarães: konceptualizacija članka, pisanje članka s fokusom na teorijski i metodološki okvir, davanje povratnih informacija tokom procesa analize podataka; Leslie Cordie: davanje povratnih informacija tokom pisanja članka, konačno uređivanje i formatiranje članka.

obrazovanja odraslih. Osim toga, praksa edukatora koji se bave obrazovanjem odraslih a koju su oni sami opisali sadrži nekoliko logika akcija. U ovoj studiji se ističe postojanje hibridnog profesionalizma u obrazovanju odraslih.²⁴

Ključne reči: obrazovanje odraslih, akademska profesionalizacija, hibridni profesionalizam, logike akcija, poređenje

²⁴ Zahvaljujemo se svim učesnicima u komparativnoj grupi „Aktivnosti, kompetencije i hibridni profesionalizam u obrazovanju odraslih“ na skupu pod nazivom „Akademija o obrazovanju odraslih – međunarodne i komparativne studije o obrazovanju odraslih i celoživotnom učenju“, koji je u februaru 2023. godine održan na Univerzitetu Julius Maximilians u Virzburgu. Rad i diskusije u okviru ove grupe i njenih međunarodnih članova predstavljali su polaznu tačku za ovaj članak i obogatili su perspektive autora. Ovaj rad su podržali ERASMUS+ Blended Intensive Program (BIP), Grant No. 2022-1-DE01-KA131-HED-000057161-1, i Human Dynamics Center (HDC) Fakulteta humanističkih nauka Univerziteta Julius-Maximilians u Virzburgu.